JAPAN EAST TIMOR MEMO

TL 5194

No.6 (July, 1989)

Appeal on Behalf of East Timorese Students

On June 19 six East Timorese students sought asylum in two embassies in Jakarta. Five of them had fled from Bali, where they were studying, after a fellow East Timorese student was arrested on June 14. The sixth was studying in Jakarta. The six men believed that they were in danger of being arrested for involvement in the resistance against Indonesian occupation. A wave of arrests began in early May in East Timor and, with the June 14 arrest of Elias Pereira Moniz in Bali, appeared to be spreading to the East Timorese student community outside East Timor. Another student who reportedly also intended to seek asylum, Lucas da Costa, was arrested on the night of June 15 in Jakarta and as of this moment has not been seen since.

Four of the six asylum seekers, Joao dos Reis, Avelino Coelho da Silva, Agapito Cardosa, and Marciano Garcia da Silva, went into the Vatican embassy. A spokesman for the Vatican reportedly said, "These people are afraid of torture and that they might be arrested." Newspaper reports say that they left after two days, in the "protection" of former vice-governor of East Timor, Mr. Francisco Lopez da Cruz. The other two, Carlos da Silva Lopes and Fernando de Araujo, entered the Japanese Embassy and were reportedly in the lobby of the Embassy until 1:30 AM on June 22. They reportedly left the embassy "voluntarily" after receiving assurances that they would not be arrested. They are reportedly in the "protection" of another Timorese politician, Salvador Ximenes Soares.

Both the Vatican and Japanese embassies consistently refused the students' requests for asylum. (It is now known that the six approached the Swedish Embassy on 16 June but left when embassy officials threatened to call in the army.)

In Japan, on June 20 an organization of parliamentarians, the Diet Forum on the East Timor Issue, petitioned the Foreign Minister to accept the two students' request for asylum, but to no avail. On June 22, after the students had left the embassy, representatives of the Free East Timor Japan Coalition, Amnesty International-Japan Chapter, and the foundation for Human Rights in Asia, accompanied by a member of parliament, visited the Foreign Ministry to ascertain the facts in the case and to request the ministry to take measures to safeguard the students. (In a similar case three years ago, the Dutch Embassy took measures to monitor the situation of the four East Timorese students to whom it denied asylum. This form of

protection is believed to have been important in assuring that the Indonesian government would abide by its "promise" not to arrest them.)

The Foreign Ministy official stated that the Japanese Embassy had made no commitment whatsoever to contact the two to ascertain their safety. Nor would the official disclose who in the Indonesian government had given assurances that the two would not be arrested. "No comment" was the official's consistent response to every attempt to ascertain what had occurred in the embassy and what the students' prospects were.

From the scant news about the four who unsuccessfully sought asylum in the Vatican Embassy, it would seem that the Vatican's handling of this case was no less callous than that of Japan. (The Pope is scheduled to visit Indonesia and East Timor this October. A visit to Indonesia scheduled in 1983 had to be cancelled because of the East Timor issue, and this time too the issue is presenting serious diplomatic problems.

A Jakarta Post editorial said that the six asylum seekers, and possibly all of the several hundred East Timorese students in Indonesia, may be in need of "counselling".

The incident, occuring as it did at the time of the execution of the pro-democracy Chinese, received little attention by the media in Japan and most human rights and Asian concerns groups.

All of these considerations lead us to believe that it is essential to exert pressure on the Vatican and Japanese Embassies to, at the minimum, maintain regular contact with the students as a form of protection. The Free East Timor Japan Coalition is asking Japanese people to send postcards with this request to the two embassies. We know that to be effective, however, there must be a widespread international expression of concern. Thus we are asking you/your organization to contact the embassies in the way you find most appropriate and let them know your awareness of and concern about the fate of the students. If you would take the trouble to send us a copy of any letter, etc. that you send, we would be most grateful.

Finally, this case has once again brought home the fact that until the Indonesian occupation of East Timor ceases, more and more East Timorese will become victims of repression. In responding to the plight of the six students, we hope to build a wider network of awareness and concern about the basic issue of East Timor. We count on your support.

Vatican Embassy

Apostolic Pro-Nuncio
Archbishop Francesco Canalini
Jln. Merdeka Timur 18
Jakarta Pusat
Indonesia

tel. 62-21-341-143

Japanese Embassy

Ambassador of Japan
His Excellency Sumio Edamura
The Embassy of Japan
Jln. M.H. Thamrin 24,
Jakarta
Indonesia

tel. 62-21-324-308
324-948
325-396

Amnesty Book Published in Japan

In 1985 Amnesty International launched an East Timor campaign and published a 92-page report, "East Timor: Violations of Human Rights." The Japanese branch of Amnesty participated in the 1985 campaign and decided as a special project to publish a Japanese version of the booklet. Arrangements were made with a publishing company, Daisan Shokan, to bring out the report as part of a full-length book, to be translated and edited by Japan Amnesty, containing supplementary chapters on the background of the issue and the "Japan connection."

This April the 310-page book came out with the title Chiisana shima no ookina senso (Big war on a small island) and is getting favorable reviews by national media such as the Mainichi Shimbun and Asahi Journal as well as publications by church and human rights organizations. Chiisana shima sells for ¥1,800.

Japan East Timor Memo will be bringing you excerpts in English of some of the material from the book on the "Japan connection," but if you would like to order a copy of the book, please drop us a line.

Intoxicating Solidarity

Japanese solidarity groups are never short on good ideas for actions. The problem is they usually cost money. This year, however, one good idea came with its own built-in fund-raising device: solidarity wine.

Wine is not commonly found on the dinner table in most Japanese homes, but with a fast-growing interest in gourmet food and beverages, the time seemed right to offer people here a chance to express their solidarity with the East Timorese struggle by contributing to the movement in exchange for a bottle of Portuguese wine.

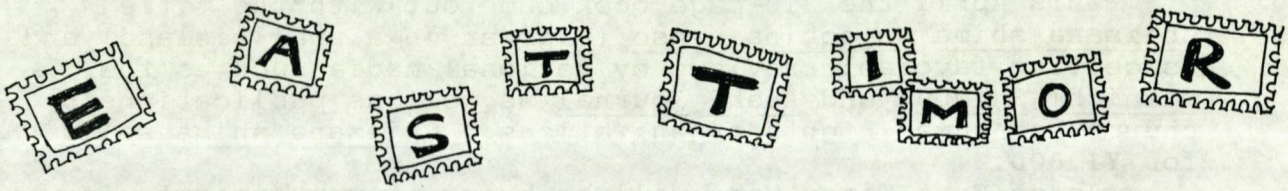
Through the Fretilin office in Lisbon, Portugal and a Japanese wine importer, we arranged to import a trial shipment of 5,000 bottles each of red and white table wine from the Dao region. The wine was priced at ¥1,000 per bottle, a modest sum. A portion of the price goes to support Fretilin overseas activities. Most of the bottles were sold through an "alternative trade" company based in Tokyo, mainly to consumer coops. The company, after running tests on the wine for additives, radiation, taste, etc., sent it out with flying colors and a "Solidarity with East Timor" label and blurb in Japanese. Some 1,000 bottles were also distributed directly by our solidarity groups, and on these our Japanese Coalition received a ¥100 "commission" per bottle.

The wine sold like hotcakes and also provided a chance for our groups to hold "wine parties" etc. as an enjoyable form of outreach. Our commission, though modest, will help defray some of the costs of our next speaking tour campaign.

Intoxicated by our initial success, we are now importing a second shipment, this time of the high class "vintage" type wine. Yes, spirits are high in Japan this year!

Solidarity through Old Stamps

Women in Yamagata, Japan who last November heard two East Timorese speak about the plight of their country decided to collect used stamps as a means to raise funds for East Timorese women. They have gotten in touch with OPMT, the Timorese women's organization which has a branch in Portugal, and OPMT has told them it would welcome any financial support for their activities that the stamps would bring in.



Japan Gives Indonesia $2 Billion Aid.

Japan decided to give Indonesia US$2 billion aid this year. Of this $150 million is what was promised but could not be contracted last year, so the amount allocated anew this year is $1.85 billion. This further consists of $1.2 billion Yen loan and other $650 million loans provided via the Import-Export Bank of Japan.

At the IGGI last June Japan pledged $2.11 billion. This is almost half of the total IGGI based aid to Indonesia.

By the way, readers may still remember the Japanese aid to Indonesia's radio monitoring project, which is suspected of being used to destroy resistance's radio communication, because one of the planned stations was in Kupang, West Timor, and this could be a mobile station. Recently it came to be known to us that another station (also can be mobile) was planned in Dili, East Timor, in the same project. Now it's quite obvious this aid provides the Indonesian forces with a high-tech tool to destroy resistance's communication. Officially the Japanese government has not recognised East Timor's integration with Indonesia but it approved the project which includes the territory. How can such an approval be justified?

Dão (Red & White)

Vintage Port